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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1396  
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0061  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000041

NOFORN

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA  
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO AMCONSUL ALMATY  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/27

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [GR](#) [TU](#) [CY](#)

SUBJECT: MFA TALKS TURKEY

REF: ANKARA 57

CLASSIFIED BY: Deborah A. McCarthy, Deputy Chief of Mission; REASON:  
1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. MFA interlocutors were wary of Turkish motives in the Aegean yet intent on finding ways to improve relations in a January 19 meeting. While they attributed some of the positive gestures from Turkey toward the tail-end of 2009 as posturing in advance of the December 2009 European Council meeting on EU accession progress, they did feel that Turkey was looking to make 2010 a good year in bilateral relations. They acknowledged a decrease in the amount of Turkish overflights of Greek Aegean islands compared to the first nine months of 2009, but said overflights continue. The challenge in bilateral relations, they noted, was how to turn warm atmospherics into concrete results; they observed with concern the continuation of Turkey's troubling behavior and claims in the Aegean, and PM Erdogan's recent linking of progress on the Halki Seminary to issues involving Greek muslims of Turkish descent in western Thrace. They downplayed the cancellation of a January 16 trip by Alt/FM Droutsas to Turkey, noting it will happen at some point, and anticipated a meeting with Turkish FM Davutoglu on the margins of the London Conference on Afghanistan. On Cyprus, they resisted the notion that negotiations should be deadline-driven, and again lamented Turkish pressure on the Turkish Cypriots. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) PolCouns and Pol-Mil Chief met Counselor Pericles Boutos and First Secretary Lili Grammatika of the MFA's Turkey Desk on January 19, covering a range of issues in the wake of the contact between Greek President Papoulias and Turkish PM Erdogan on the margins of the World Future Energy Summit January 18 in Abu Dhabi, and the announcement by Erdogan that he intended to visit Greece soon.

a. (C) GREECE-TURKEY: Greek press had speculated earlier in January that the cancellation of Alternate FM Droutsas' January 16 trip to Ankara had been a sign of Greek disillusionment with its relations with Turkey. Our interlocutors downplayed such speculation, noting that a visit will come at some point in the future. They took PM Erdogan's announcement of a visit to Greece prior to being invited in stride, noting that it would have

happened "sooner rather than later" in any case. Both indicated the MFA working levels had played an insignificant role in the formulation of PM Papandreou's reply to PM Erdogan's October 30 note on bilateral relations (note: the letter was ultimately sent on January 25), but stated they had been tasked to devise strategies for improving Greek-Turkish relations over the coming year, which they had just started working on. Though they dismissed some of the warmth coming from Ankara in late 2009 as posturing in advance of the early December European Council review on accession progress, they did express their belief that Turkey was interested in making 2010 a positive year for bilateral relations. Their primary concern was how to turn these positive atmospherics into concrete results, particularly in the Aegean.

b. (S/NF) AEGEAN: Boutos and Grammatika acknowledged that Turkish Air Force overflights of Greek islands in the Aegean were occurring - albeit less frequently now compared to the first nine months of 2009. (Comment: this comment is in line with those reported reftel, as well as a series of Athens DATT reporting of Hellenic Air Force statistics over 2009 and into 2010 that detailed the increase in overflights and the subsequent decrease. End Comment.) In response to a question as to whether or not Turkey was showing more initiative of late in resolving Aegean squabbles, specifically the Erdogan note and the slow Greek reply, Grammatika responded that it was easy for Turkey to put forward initiatives, as Turkey was the one seeking to change the Aegean status quo that is based on international treaties. Both interlocutors noted Greek willingness to examine Turkish ideas, but were wary on whether they

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were just more of the same non-starters questioning Greek sovereignty that had been proposed over the years.

c. (C) HALKI: Both expressed concern at PM Erdogan's recent public statements that sought to link progress in reopening the Patriarchate's Halki Seminary in Istanbul with issues involving the Greek Muslim minority in western Thrace. (Comment: news reports January 26 of Papandreou's response to Erdogan highlighted that Papandreou reportedly rejected any linkage between Halki Seminary and Thrace Muslim minority issues, underlining that the respect of all Greek citizens - regardless of their religious beliefs and cultural or ethnic origin - is the exclusive responsibility of the Greek state, and that human rights cannot be the object of negotiations. End comment.)

d.) (C) CYPRUS: PolCouns noted our belief that time was vital and that negotiations had reached a critical juncture, and encouraged Greece to play a positive role. Boutos acknowledged the pending "Presidential" elections in the north, but pushed back against the idea of negotiations being driven by a deadline. He stated that Turkey needs to give Talat more freedom, and as always, is too heavy-handed. Speckhard